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Transcriber's Office

Education Committee  
November 05, 2009

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[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Education met at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2009, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting gubernatorial appointments to the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission. Senators present: Greg Adams, Chairperson; Gwen Howard, Vice Chairperson; Brad Ashford; Bill Avery; Abbie Cornett; Robert Giese; and Kate Sullivan. Senators absent: Ken Haar.

SENATOR ADAMS: Let's begin our hearing if we could, please. I want to welcome everyone who's here for the hearing of the Education Committee. We have some gubernatorial appointments that we need to deal with this morning, and for those of you in attendance and those on the other end of the phone line, we have Senator Brad Ashford with us today, Senator Giese, Senator Cornett, Vice Chair Senator Howard, Senator Sullivan, and Senator Avery with us this morning. And just as a matter of procedure, I'd ask those in the audience to turn their cell phones off so that we don't have interruption, and we will move through these in the order that we have them. We'll begin here in just a second with Jane Keller, an appointment to the Board of Educational Lands and Funds, and then we'll move on to William Scott Wilson, an appointment to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, and then finally, we have three appointments to the Nebraska Education Telecommunications Commission, and they would be Ken Bird, Phil Dudley, Jr., and Richard Shoemaker. So with that, and we've got Phillip on the phone right now. All right, in light of that then, Phil, you're on the phone? [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Yes, I am, uh-huh. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Thank you for joining us, so we will take things a bit out of order today in order to...if that's all right with everyone, having Phil on the phone. So we will begin with the hearing on the appointment of Phil Dudley, Jr. to the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission. Is this a reappointment? [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Yes, it is. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: All right. Thank you, Phil. Phil, if you would, we have some of the data here in front of us that was turned in to the Governor's Office, but maybe you could just give the committee a bit of background on yourself and then answer any questions the committee might have. [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Well, I'm Phil Dudley. I'm the president of Hastings College. I'm in my tenth year as president. I've been at Hastings College 37 years. I very much enjoy being on Nebraska Education Telecommunications Commission. It's been a great

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learning experience for me, and I hope I bring something to the table since I am a college president, private college president, and would like to serve again. I'd be glad to respond to any questions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: All right, thank you, Phil. Are there questions for Mr. Dudley? I have a couple. First of all, I remember taking a graduate level economics class from you (laughter). Are you still as mean as you were back then? [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Oh, no, this is not good (laughter), not good at all. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: It was all of those algebraic equations you put on the white board that just almost put me to sleep. [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Right, right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: But I learned a lot, I learned a lot. [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Well, you have my condolences (laughter). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: On a more serious note,... [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Phil, you know, from my perspective, it seems to me that in the field of education, we are at a change point, and I see it in our P-16 Initiative that we have reevaluating our standards, reevaluating our goal for education in Nebraska, generational goals in Nebraska. I see it in our curriculum, in our community colleges, and I sense that whatever direction we end up going,...we're at a point there is going to be change, that there are going to be some, what I call peripheral changes that we maybe haven't even noted yet. And one of those might very well be some reform that occurs within the role and mission of our ESUs. Another one, potentially, might be in the way that Nebraska Telecommunications Commission looks at their response to our changes in education. So I have a very broad question for you. Where do you see things going? [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Well, I think there is certainly a commitment that at least I have as a college president to try to make our education affordable to all students regardless of their socioeconomic status. I think that's terribly important, and in our particular situation at Hastings College 30 percent of our students are Pell Grant recipients. And so I think just the affordability issue is huge for us, and again I know that we have a strategic plan for our Nebraska Education Telecommunications Commission in trying to deliver education by several different vehicles, and so I feel good about that. I think that's the

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challenge, and then also to, of course, keep our intellectual human resource talent in the state. I think that's the other big challenge for us is the brain drain so we provide (inaudible) so folks stay here...stay in the state. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: And what about the Telecommunications Commission? What do you see their role may be as we move into this educational reform period?  
[CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Well, again, I think certainly the various vehicles whether it be through our television, radio or through the big vehicles and then also just the programs that we're providing that we recently provided I think are just absolutely first-rate. And I think that's a big part of the whole educational process (inaudible) Nebraska and access to that vehicle. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay. Thank you, Phil. Are there other...Senator Avery.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Actually, I don't have a question, but I do have a story. Since you started out with a personal story, I think I can too. Dr. Dudley, this is Bill Avery. You may remember several years ago I attended a meeting at Hastings College of the Nebraska Bar Association. [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: I am not a lawyer, however, I'm proud to say. But you were vice president at that time, and your president was from South Carolina, and you said that was the first time that you learned that your name actually was a two syllable word, Pheel (phonetic). [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Yeah, it's Pheel (phonetic), that's right, yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Pheel (phonetic). [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: And I remember the water, and I remember in the president's home we had a lot of attorneys out back we were hosting, and the irrigation system, the watering systems came on, and they all got wet. And as they ran out of the backyard they were all threatening to sue the college (laughter). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: And you said that your president at that time said, what we need around here is a hole in the ground as a sign of progress. [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: That's right. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR AVERY: And you got a hole in the ground. [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: You've got a great memory. Yeah, that's true (laughter).  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: I have no questions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Are there other questions? Well, seeing none, one of these days, Mr. Dudley, I'll ask you why it was that you remembered Senator Avery so much from that crowd of folks but (laughter) we won't put that on the record. Thank you for joining us today. We appreciate it. [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Well, thank you for accommodating me. I really appreciate it. Thank you so much. Should I hang up now? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

PHILLIP DUDLEY: Okay. Thank you. Bye-bye. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Do we have another on-line? And is he on-line now? At 10:45? Okay. Why don't...well, why don't we just stand at ease for a couple of moments if it's going to be 10:45, if that's all right with you folks, and we'll get Dr. Bird on.  
[CONFIRMATION]

EASE

SENATOR ADAMS: All right, here we go. Ken Bird, are you there? [CONFIRMATION]

KEN BIRD: You've got me (laughter) whether you want me or not, Senator.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ASHFORD: Did he hear me say he's going to get it? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Thank you, Ken, for joining us today. For the record, we have the hearing for the appointment of Ken Bird also to the Nebraska Education Telecommunications Commission. Ken, we have most of the committee here today. Senator Haar is not with us and temporarily Senator Cornett had to step out, and she'll be back. And what we'd like to do, Ken, very simply if you would give us just a brief statement of your background and then field a few questions from the committee, and then we'll leave you alone. [CONFIRMATION]

KEN BIRD: Thank you, Senator. I'm happy to do that. Senator Adams, members of the committee, again this is Ken Bird, and I appreciate you accommodating me calling in for

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this confirmation hearing. I have spent my career in public education primarily in K-12 education. I've (inaudible) about 35 years at Westside Community Schools, the last 16 years as superintendent of the Westside Community Schools. I have about five years experience with the Nebraska Department of Education as the director of compliance, primarily in the areas of special education and special needs programming, and have been involved with public television and public radio on their various boards for probably the last ten years. And this will be a reappointment of me, obviously, for the commission. I've enjoyed that work. I am now the president/CEO of an operating foundation that's putting together a program called the Bright Futures Foundation, having started a program that focuses on serving young people in poverty, helping them finish high school, access postsecondary education, complete their postsecondary education and then move them into the work force. And it's been a very interesting and exciting activity for the last 15 months for me. Senator Adams, is that adequate?  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: I think so. I suspect you're going to have an awful lot of questions, because Senator Ashford is here today. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ASHFORD: Hardly adequate (laughter). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: And now you may be cross examined by Senator Ashford. Committee, are there questions? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I have one. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Yes, Senator Sullivan. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. This is Kate Sullivan from Cedar Rapids. I'd like to know what you feel is a connection, if any, between your work with Bright Futures and some of the directions you may take the commission? [CONFIRMATION]

KEN BIRD: Well, (inaudible) it's been real interesting to me over the last 15 months. We have found many interceptions with what we're doing as far as access to appropriate education and some of the resources that NET has available to us, and the (inaudible) of disability helping NET with disability and (inaudible--fades out) is another...I think benefit I can bring to the organization, but I think just focus on the Bright Futures Foundation in my role would be limited, and I think the 40 years I have in education will allow me to contribute to the commission forward. I know I (inaudible) excellent working relationship with them. And, hopefully, my experiences and background and the knowledge I'm bringing about, the needs of young people in poverty that you need some of the educational achievement gap issues that we have and how we do that, postsecondary issues, some are solved with emergency (inaudible), and helping these young people access programs and training. And I think NET has a role in that, so I

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hope...and an influence in that area. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

KEN BIRD: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Are there other questions? Ken, if I might then, you have been part of discussions on the race to the top and a whole variety of things, and it's my feel that we are in the midst of some potentially significant educational reform nationwide, but particularly in Nebraska. Regardless what happens with our application, our P-16 Initiative and all else, where do you see Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission fitting in this reform movement? [CONFIRMATION]

KEN BIRD: Senator, it's something that in the last two weeks Rod Bates with NET and I have spent considerable time line in bringing them in to the fold (inaudible--fades out) looking at the connectivity they're going to be able to offer or can offer today as far as virtual education and support statewide, and (inaudible--fades out) exciting thing to me is that we're working on a statewide educational agenda. And so often NET has been left out of that dialogue, and I think it's,...the time has come. I think there's opportunities here to engage NET in that to have them enter a significant, responsible part to helping us better educate our students across the state, and whether it's more rigorous curriculum or helping to close the achievement gap or making available appropriate technologies to all of our kids statewide, I think NET can play a critical role. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Thank you, Ken. Are there other questions for Ken? Seeing none, thank you for your commitment to the state and to education and for being with us today. [CONFIRMATION]

KEN BIRD: Well, I echo that to the committee and good luck with your difficult discussions you're going to have during this special session. I know (inaudible) education is in good hands with Senator Adams (inaudible--fades out) and (inaudible words--fades out) great faith in you, and I know you'll do a great job. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Thank you, Ken. [CONFIRMATION]

KEN BIRD: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Bye. [CONFIRMATION]

KEN BIRD: Bye. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Okay, is that the last of our call-ins? [CONFIRMATION]

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REBECCA COLLINS: It is. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: All right. With that, why don't we...Richard Shoemaker...Rich, could you come forward and sit at the microphone, please? And Rich, when you get there, could you state your name for the record and then do just as our other appointees have done and give us a little background on yourself and field some questions?  
[CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: I can do that. My name is Dick Shoemaker, Richard Shoemaker, according to your resumes, and I'm from Cambridge, Nebraska, in southwest Nebraska. And I am currently the...and have been for 25 years, the chairman and president of a company called Pinpoint Holdings which is a communications company. I was also one of the original appointees in Governor Nelson's Excellence in Ed Council which was funded by lottery money which basically did most of the funding of the distance learning programs in the state of Nebraska. I can't remember how many years ago that's been. And the portion that I do in the communications world is we own phone company, we own a cable TV company, we own wireless companies, we own a long-haul fiber company across the Midwest, so I think probably I have some qualifications to work with this organization called ETV Commission. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: All right. Thank you, Dick. Are there questions? Yes, Senator Avery. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Welcome, Mr. Shoemaker. I note that you are from the 3rd District, and you and I had a brief conversation before this hearing began about programming through NETV in the outer Nebraska or greater Nebraska. If you had the ability to change NETV in any way, how would you do it to better serve our rural communities which can't even get...as far as I know, they can't even get women's volleyball games, baseball games because of lack of funds perhaps? What would you do?  
[CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: The...I mean let's step back because the Nebraska Educational Television System is really one of the best systems in the entire country, and there may be some budget...I mean, obviously, we're in a budget constraint time period here, but I would tell you that I've always been a huge supporter of getting more programming types of services out in the 3rd District as an example. And I think as we move forward, I think what we're going to have to do is make it much more than just a one-way delivery system. I think we're going to have to make it a two-way delivery system which makes it an interactive system. And I have been and publicly have basically said, we've got to do some things different in terms of satellite delivery system that we've got, and what we have to do is we've got to get to a much bigger broadband solution. And the way you do that is through fiber connectivity because of the bandwidth

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that you need. And I think right now there's a study going on within the commission to see what our bandwidth needs are going to be, and I don't think that's completed yet. But I'm a huge supporter of programming in the rural areas, much more so.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Isn't it true that in some of the rural areas, NET might be the only source of television or is that not the case? [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: I don't know. You know what? I'm not sure I would say that, but I would say that it's a great system statewide, and it's one of the very few in the country that has that kind of statewide coverage. I always joke, quite honestly, that if this was a Third World, that would be the first place that I'd want to take over if I was a dictator would be Nebraska ETV, because it's got coverage across the entire state. I don't know if that's good for the record, but (laugh). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Actually, the fact is that's the... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ASHFORD: That's an interesting suggestion. We don't get to have those suggestions that much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: And the truth is, you're right in a coup d'etat when they take place in Latin America, that's the first thing they do is take over the communications system (laugh). [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: Sorry, I didn't mean to digress. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: That's all right. Are there other questions? Senator Sullivan.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Just one quick one. This is your...have you been on the board...the commission? [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: I'm sorry, yes, I have been. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: How many...how long? [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: I think this is my second appointment. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Senator Howard. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you, Chairman Adams. I notice that you list two

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foundations that you're involved with. I wonder if you could tell me a little bit about them: Kitty Perkins Foundation, Shoemaker Family Foundation? [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: I mean, they're foundations...just the long and the short of it...they're foundations that were generated from Edwin E. Perkins, which was basically Kool-Aid money, and we have been in business since early seventies and do a tremendous amount of gifting towards rural Nebraska. And specifically, we give money to rural programming in the radio and the TV business and schools and libraries and healthcare institutions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: That's really interesting. Thank you. I didn't realize you were associated with the Kool-Aid, but I do know a little bit about the history of it. It's kind of one of Nebraska's famous products. [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: Yeah, he was...Edwin Perkins... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Gourmet products (laugh). [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: He was my uncle, so, yeah, so we knew him, and it's kind of a cool story so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Yeah, oh. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Other questions? Then in fairness to you, let me ask you the same question I've asked the other two appointees. Where do you see educational telecommunications going in terms of our statewide education reform movement? What's the role? Is there a change in mission? Where do you see it going? [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: I don't think there's necessarily a change in mission. I think that the mission is a fairly good mission. I think it somewhat has been watered down in the past by some of the technology that has been floated around. As an example, this...what I saw in the Excellence in Ed Council, quite honestly, with the distance learning was that ETV...their mission was, in fact, education on an electronic basis with the entire state. But what happened was that you ended up having some cross purposes with public schools and that...I think that bringing that back together from a committee perspective, from an educational perspective probably would be healthy for the state. I also think that we're going to have to move in a much more interactive...at a much more interactive place. I have never...I have really never been a big supporter of one-way delivery systems for education other than Sesame Street which was a great...you know, that was a great tool that really kicked off learning. But I think as we move through this technology revolution that we've got going, interactivity is going to be very important, and having the technology available to do that is going to be critical as a

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state. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Good. Any other questions? Well, thank you, sir, for your patience and your service to the state. We appreciate you being here today. [CONFIRMATION]

RICHARD SHOEMAKER: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: You betcha. We'll move on to our next hearing. Why don't we jump back to the top of the list now? And we have an appointment to the Board of Educational Lands and Funds, M. Jane Keller. Thank you, Jane, for joining us today, and if you could state your name for the record and like the other folks, give us a little background on yourself and answer some questions. [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: All right. My name is Jane Keller. I live in Bassett, Nebraska. I have been before this board several times, and I...my husband and I were...he is no longer living, but we still have our ranch and very definitely agri-oriented. I served on the Cattlewomen's boards nearly all...every committee and was president, and so like I said, I'm very, very cattle and agri-oriented. We have three members on our board that are pretty agri-oriented too. We just lost Tom Vickers, and we were sorry to see him go, but he...he was a lot of help, so we are now in the process of getting new board members on. And I was appointed by five governors and then Governor Heineman reappointed me at this session, and we...it's been a real learning process for me. I have learned so much from being on this board and dealing with it over the years. We have not ever lost help except when they retired, and we...over the years, we have absorbed two office people retired and left, and our office absorbed those, so we haven't hired more people...and two field men. And the other field men, we divided it up and have come in. So we have tried to operate as well as we can and make as much money as we can for the state of Nebraska. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Thank you. Are there questions? Yes, Senator Avery.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Good morning. [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Good morning. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: What is your position on liquidation of land? [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Well, I honestly think that right now certainly, our land is making more money than the other. But there was land that wasn't doing as well, and I agree some of that land that if we can sell it, we would probably be better off, and we have been trying to do that. But this is not a real good time to sell land, because it's down and where the land doesn't produce and make good money, then I do think it is. But on the whole, it's

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been much, much better than stocks and bonds. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Over time, you mean? [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: I think over a long period of time it's been probably better than some of them. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Well, the stock market by most estimates that I've seen, most analyses does far better than any other kind of investment. [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Well, I guess I am not real up on stock markets, but I know our...anything that we've had in it has certainly not made us the money that our cattle have. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Well, I mean, the present time, of course, is not... [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: And over a long period of time too... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Yeah, over a long period of time land has done better for you than...? [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Oh yes, by far. And, of course, we've been able to operate it ourselves, and that does help. And...but...and I'm not saying that everything on land is...would be better. And we have been trying to sell, but you can go into these places, and you just...these people don't want to sell or buy and so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: We had a discussion in the last session, a bill was brought to...before this committee that would allow the land in trust funds to lease some land to wind turbine developers and what's your position on that? [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Well, I think it'd be a great thing for our income, and all of you know that we have a new executive director, and he's been very, very busy going into this wind and carbon sequestrate and, you know, it's...it's going to help our school fund tremendously. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: What would be your position on the idea of taking the money earned from leasing some of these lands to wind development, taking that money and devoting it to teacher pay enhancement? [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Well, I don't know. It isn't really up, I guess, to us to do it. I understand that teachers probably are underpaid, and I guess if this would be helpful, I don't know that I have a terrible problem with that. It all goes into your fund, and I don't know that

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it's up to us to decide that, whatever the Legislature...probably your Legislature and all should decide that, but everything goes into the fund, as you know. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Are all of your meetings public meetings, open to the public?  
[CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Oh yes. Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: And you don't have any meetings that are closed to the public?  
[CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Once in awhile there will be something that will be closed, but so very, very rarely have I...do I even remember having closed meetings unless it would be something like we were...when we were getting our new executive director, and we needed to discuss prices and things like that. Now those weren't, but we don't have too terribly many people come to our meetings. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Yeah, I went to one. [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: Yes. We've been...we've been welcoming as far as I know to any of them. Anybody who wants to come and any of our few people... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Where are your meetings held and how do you publicize them?  
[CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: They're publicized in the papers, and they're held at the office there, and downstairs we have a place where the... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: It's out by Westfield... [CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: On Cotner, 555 North Cotner, I believe it is. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Right, okay. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Other questions? Well, seeing none, Senator Avery really asked a bunch of questions so I guess he got you covered (laughter). Thank you for coming all the way here from Bassett and all your years of service. We appreciate that.  
[CONFIRMATION]

JANE KELLER: You're welcome. Well, it's been a good time for me too.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Good. Thank you, ma'am. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR ASHFORD: It's amazing how many wonderful people we have (laugh) in the state. I just (laughter). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Absolutely. We'll move to our final appointment, William Scott Wilson, to the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WILSON: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: And you've witnessed the routine for the last 45 minutes so if you could state your name for the record and tell us about yourself. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WILSON: Thank you, Senator. My name is William Scott Wilson. I actually go by my middle name, Scott, and that would be a story for another time. But I reside in Papillion, Nebraska. I'm raising a family with two daughters. My lovely wife, Lisa, came today and she's in the audience today. I currently I work for Qwest Communications, been there 25 years, done a number of things for them. Now I'm in the management end of the business where I'm an engineer for that company right now. I'm a lifelong Nebraskan. I like to kind of call myself a passionate Nebraskan. I've lived all over the state and have attended many of the schools in Nebraska to try to better myself. I'm a graduate of Wayne State College, attended Bellevue University, UNO, Metro to try to keep my continued education going. And that's kind of where I'm at right now. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: All right, thank you, Scott. Now, let's open it up for questions from the committee. Senator. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: So will this be your first...? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WILSON: Yes, ma'am. Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: And why do you want to be on the commission?  
[CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WILSON: I've always had a great passion for education. I'm raising a family right now. I've been really heavily involved in it. I feel, my personal beliefs, that the education is the most important thing, and it leads to successes and failures in life down the road. I've always been interested in trying to help the state. A few years ago, I actually ran for county commissioner in District 5 in Sarpy County, finished a close second, but I've always volunteered my time and I want to make a difference, and I feel that I can. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Senator Howard. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you, Chairman Adams. I'm just wondering in looking at your resume, do you see any potential conflict for you in working for Qwest and being on telecommunications? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WILSON: Not really for this particular board. We had to...in order for me to be appointed, I had to go through a rigorous ordeal with my company with legal, with Rex Fisher who you might know is our president, and Kent Popken who's probably down here knocking on your doors, too, for our company. But they've cleared it with this, and I feel as well as my company feels there will not be any conflict of interest with the telecommunications piece and the education. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Senator Avery. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: If I said to you...thank you, Mr. Chair. If I said to you that the commission is redundant, expensive, and unnecessary, and we ought to get rid of it, what would you say? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WILSON: Well, Senator, I'd have to kind of disagree with you (laughter). And, in my opinion, to keep this short, I believe that this commission, and I've been involved with it now for a couple months now, but I believe that this commission does two things that are very, very important for the state of Nebraska. The first one, it kind of...it's in a partial nonpartisan checks and balances for the state as far as handing out, you know, funds for the state, making sure we don't duplicate certain things, making sure we push the right particular things. An instance, we've been doing a lot of work with the P-16 Initiative that's out. The second one, I feel, is that commission is going to help all of you folks do your job. LB340 comes to mind. That's been a year-long study which you all know, that's going to, hopefully, help give you a recommendation to make better decisions for our state as far as education is concerned. So being a taxpayer and being a lifelong Nebraskan, sometimes things do become redundant, but in certain things with...that I see, you need that checks and balances in there to make things better. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Your budget, I believe, is somewhere in the neighborhood of about \$9 million dollars? [CONFIRMATION]

MARSHALL HILL: Sir, if you'd like me to respond. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Yeah, I would. [CONFIRMATION]

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MARSHALL HILL: The total...I'm Marshall Hill, executive director of the Coordinating Commission. The largest part of our budget is tax-free funds, funds to support financial aid programs for the state of Nebraska students. We have an operational budget for operating funds of about \$1.3 million, 13 staff members, small agency.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Okay, thank you. I'm not trying to give you a hard time. It's just that I've been looking at the administration of higher education in the state, and I'm having a hard time justifying the multiple layers that we have, and Marshall knows that I brought this up before. I'm not picking on you. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: Are there other questions for Scott? I guess not. Thank you for being here today, we appreciate it and your service and willing to serve. We appreciate it. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WILSON: Thank you for your time. Thank you, thank you, Senator.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR ADAMS: That will close our hearings for this morning and committee, if you don't mind... [CONFIRMATION]

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Chairperson

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Committee Clerk